Separate State for Vidarbha

2056. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a delegation comprising Members of Parliament and other leaders for Vidarbha called on the Prime Minister on September 28, 1996, to demand a separate State for Vidarbha region;

(b) if so, the details of the plea made by them, indicating the grounds adduced by them in support of this demand; and

(c) Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The delegation pleaded for a separate State of Vidarbha on the basis of the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission.

(c) The Government is committed to distribution of powers and decentralisation of authority in political, administrative and economic spheres. There is no proposal at present for constituting smaller States.

Nuclear Non-proliferation project by IAEA

2057. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the three Asian countries including India, warned the Vienna based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for its ambitious and equally controversial project to enhance the current nuclear non-proliferation system, at the annual meet of IAEA held recently in Vienna;

(b) if so, the details of the project and the grounds on which it was opposed by India;

(c) the decisions taken at the meeting regarding the projects; and

(d) the other decisions taken therein towards a fair nuclear disarmament?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) to (d) Several Asian countries, including India, raised concerns at the proposed strengthening of safeguards under programme 93+2, currently under discussion at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, many countries believe that IAEA safeguards need to be strengthened. Agreement has been reached on implementing some measures, consistent with present legal authority. Discussions are ongoing on measures which require additional legal authority to be vested in the Agency. This programme is not a nuclear disarmament measure. The issue of strengthened safeguards has treaty application only to non-nuclear weapon states signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and not to countries such as India, which are not signatories to the NPT.

Gang with illicit links with Pakistan

2058. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJI-RAO SHINDE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a gang with illicit links with Pakistan has been busted in Delhi on September 22, 1996;

(b) if so, the details of seizures and persons apprehended in this regard, indicating the modus operandi of the gang and its Pakistani links; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to liquidate the gang and to prevent such activities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Delhi Police arrested two persons on the 22nd September, 1996 from opposite the Taj Hotel, Jama Masjid, Delhi and recovered 50 live cartridges from them. The U.P. Police had a day earlier arrested two other persons from Saharanpur from whom several revolvers and pistols alongwith cartridges were recovered. The investigations conducted in these two cases have revealed that the persons arrested at the two places had links with some Pakistani associates and the arms were being brought in from Pakistan for use in terrorist and disruptive activities in the country. A "coolie" working at Attari Border who was being used as a conduit for supply of the arms

and ammunition to the arrested persons was also arrested by the U.P. Police.

(c) The measures taken by the Delhi Police to curb such activities in Delhi include close co-ordination with the Central and State Intelligence agencies; checking of suspected guest houses/hide outs; strict watch on foreigners' tourist camps; larger development of spotters/watchers; verification of new tenants; checking of suspected vehicles; display of photographs of known terrorists of public places and soliciting greater public cooperation.

Loss due to scrapping of Euro-issue by VSNL

2059. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General in his recent report has expressed concern about the sudden scrapping of the Euro-issue-proposal of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. in May, 1994;

(b) if so, whether inquiries have since been made into the circumstances of the scrapping of the proposal; and

(c) the extent of loss estimated to have been incurred by Government as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) No, Sir. However, the Director General of Audit, Post and Telecommunications has forwarded a copy of Draft Paragraph on deferment of "Euro issue" for inclusion in the C&AG's Report, Union Government (Commercial) No. 3 of 1997 and has given an audit analysis of the case.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Defence cooperation with other countries

2060. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the countries with which Government have established cooperation in the field of defence;

(b) whether France has recently expressed its keenness to establish military cooperation with India;

(c) if so, the reaction of government thereto; and

(d) the proposals of Government with regard to the expansion, modernisation and strengthening country's Navy, Air Force and Army?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) The Government have entered into different kinds of Agreements, Protocols, Memoranda of Understanding etc. in the field of defence cooperation with various friendly countries, such as Russia, USA, Italy, France, UK, Ukraine, Belarus, Vietnam and South Africa.

(b) and (c) Defence cooperation with France is an on going process. A Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation between India and France had been signed in January, 1982. In pursuance of this MOU; an Indo-French Joint Committee on Defence has been set up. During the meetings of the Joint Committee, matters of mutual interest pertaining to defence cooperation are discussed.

(d) Modernisation/strengthening of our Defence forces is an on going process which takes into account the changing threat scenario, the advancement of technology, the global and regional security environment and the availability of resources.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Papers to be laid on the Table. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN (TAMIL NADU): Madam, where is the Parliamentary Affairs Minister? (*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He is in the other House. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: We want to know about the women's Bill, Madam. (*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It was raised in the morning. I have taken the responsibility of talking to him during the course of the day and then come back to the House. Now, Papers to be laid on the Table. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY (ANDHRA PRADESH): Please call him. (*Interruptions*)